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RECORD OF A MEETING AT THE ELYSEE
at 9.30 a.m. on Saturday, December 19, 1959

Present:

President de Gaulle
President Eisenhower
The Prime Minister
Chancellor Adenauer
and Interpreters

President de Gaulle began by welcoming the other Heads of Government, and in particular hoping that President Eisenhower had had a good voyage. President de Gaulle felt that this journey had been of value to all the West.

President Eisenhower said that the object of his journey had been to show peace and goodwill. In addition he wanted to see whether people as well as Governments could be brought to a feeling of kinship. He had tried to carry the message that peace was not something which came as a present, but had to be worked for each day and from a position of strength. He had also tried to show that the West had a great interest in the Asiatic countries and wished to make dependable agreements with them.

President de Gaulle said that Mr. Macmillan had been to Moscow and had started the idea of the Summit meeting and all that accompanied it in principle. It was necessary to fix a date which would be agreeable to all.

would be to give Mr. Khrushchev an opportunity to refuse. It might also leave the Summit Powers open to the suspicion that they were organising world Government. President Eisenhower said that this was perhaps true but if the capital of one country concerned was proposed then there must be a hint of rotation, otherwise Mr. Khrushchev could not be expected to agree. The Prime Minister said that there was also the consideration that the possibilities of future Summits might make Mr. Khrushchev behave better, not worse. The important thing now was to set a team to work to provide a Note. Perhaps it would be possible to ask the Foreign Secretaries to provide a suitable draft Note for discussion at the Plenary session - although as they had now begun their meeting it might be necessary to leave this until the afternoon.

President de Gaulle said that he felt that the four Heads of Government should now consider the question of Germany. On this he would ask Chancellor Adenauer to speak. Chancellor Adenauer said that although it was not probable that the seventeen millions of Germans in the Eastern Zone would be liberated soon, nevertheless it was important not to neglect the link between these people and Berlin. There could be no question of de jure recognition of Eastern Germany. Whether some de facto arrangement for treating with them should be worked out was another matter which would have to be examined in the light of developments. So far as Berlin itself was concerned, the Federal Republic and Western Berlin are clear that there should be no change

in its present legal status. Any adjustments made could only be contemplated on the basis of a continuation of the present legal status, although some ^{relatively} ~~detailed~~ modifications might take place. In particular, neither the Federal Republic nor West Berlin would welcome it if the proposals of July 28 came up for discussion again. In the view of Chancellor Adenauer these proposals represented the absolute limit of what was tolerable and left no margin for bargaining. What was suggested in Geneva for the peace treaty was discussed in Geneva as a whole - the Peace Plan. This must be regarded as one package. There was this danger in any idea of an all-German Committee; this was that from the East German side only Communists would come, while on the West German side there would not only be Communists but all other parties would be represented, and the West German Socialists had put forward a plan which would inevitably lead to the Communisation of all Germany. There was therefore a danger of a Communist majority on the Committee. The Working Party in Washington had not clarified this and were said to be waiting for instructions from their Governments.

President Eisenhower said that there was of course no question of any concessions to the Russians which involved abandoning a principle. Berlin had become a symbol of Western determination to maintain its positions and to honour its agreements. This must be in accordance with right thinking. There was one matter however on which he wished to be clear. The West had made a separate peace treaty with Western Germany. The President could see no legal bar to Mr. Khrushchev making a Treaty with

East Germany, even though the West said that notwithstanding such a treaty they would maintain their position in Berlin by force if necessary. But supposing the West got into the position of maintaining themselves in Berlin by force, what would happen to the relations between Berlin and East Germany? While the West must be very firm in sustaining the principles invoked since 1945, they must also be clear what exactly they were doing in the field of practical politics and what the position of West Berlin would be. The Soviet Union had said that the West would lose all its rights. The West would stand by its principles, but must be clear what the life of West Berlin would then be. It seemed to the President that there might be an awful diminution in the standard of living in West Berlin because of trade. The Russians could annoy West Berlin by blocking the normal civilian communications with West Germany. Was there any answer to this? It was necessary to think how this situation could be dealt with.

Chancellor Adenauer said that he would like to point out that the NATO countries had decided to defend Berlin on the present legal basis. If the present legal basis were removed, the NATO guarantee would be wiped out and it would be very difficult to obtain a new guarantee from the NATO countries. He would also point out that the Western Powers had not yet concluded a peace treaty with West Germany. They had certainly concluded several treaties but these were not peace treaties and the Paris Agreements had been intentionally arranged in this way. As regards Berlin itself, there was naturally always some

risk in the situation, but Chancellor Adenauer did not himself believe that Mr. Khrushchev would start a war over Berlin. Mr. Khrushchev did not want a war at all and certainly not over Berlin. The Russians regarded East Germany as a satellite, ^{and} ~~if~~ the treaty between the D.D.R. and the Soviet Union still allowed some Soviet divisions in East Germany. In international law the Soviet Union had promised to keep communications open with Berlin and if the Soviet Union was to hand over its powers to East Germany it would also have to hand over its obligations. The Berlin Senate and the population of West Berlin were united in preserving freedom, come what might. Berlin was supplied with food and raw materials for twelve months, and if there were complications they would have to see how things went. If the West gave up the present position, it would be a symbolic act and it was impossible to see the consequences of such action for Germany as a whole. It would therefore be better to see whether Mr. Khrushchev in fact carried out his threats.

President Eisenhower said that he had said nothing about any change in the status of Berlin. The question he wished to ask was what the West did if the Communists wished to hold Berlin. The Russians surrounded Berlin and it depended for much of its prosperity on raw materials coming from the countryside of East Germany. Of course it was necessary to maintain the juridical position, but he was concerned with a practical question. Chancellor Adenauer said that the prosperity of West Berlin depended on its trade with Western Germany and

the Western world. Life was not without risk and Berlin was prepared to take a risk for its liberty and freedom. It would be wise therefore to wait and see what Mr. Khrushchev did. President de Gaulle said that the ~~present~~ position of Berlin was of course very difficult; this was an indisputable fact. It seemed however that it was not possible to allow the Communist situation to improve as regards Berlin. Even a small retreat might have a ~~bad~~ ^{very serious} effect on Germany and even on France. If one day Germany, because it was ill-treated over Berlin, changed its position, then Soviet power might be next to France, and this would have a very grave effect. For this reason the German question was the test of Soviet intentions. If Mr. Khrushchev wanted peace then he would not make trouble. But undoubtedly the position was difficult. Berlin would be the test of what Mr. Khrushchev wants to do.

President Eisenhower said that this was true, but that he still wished to consider practical questions. The West could maintain its garrison and say that it was maintaining the freedom of Berlin, but when we thought of what the Russians might do, all we could say was that if they acted this would mean that Mr. Khrushchev did not want peace. The position in Berlin derived from what the President believed to be Allied mistakes in the past in allowing the Russians too much occupation status, and it was clearly the duty of the West to stand by their position. He was still however worried about what would happen to Berlin. He was no more fearful than any other Head of Government of the consequences of his own acts

and no more inclined to give in to threats by Mr. Khrushchev. It now appeared that there was no possibility of a German peace treaty for a long time. Was the West able to stand the economic stranglehold on Berlin, thus losing the economic well-being of the city in the name of its freedom? Chancellor Adenauer enquired if President de Gaulle was not correct in thinking that the test of Mr. Khrushchev's intentions would be his attitude on Berlin at the Summit Conference, whenever that might be. ~~Agreements with~~ ^{The whole Conference} ~~Mr. Khrushchev~~ ^{Mr. Khrushchev} would be ~~useless~~ ^{useless} if in the case of Berlin, ~~he~~ ^{Mr. Khrushchev} was to break his commitments. If he did this, it would show that he did not want peace. In any case, if he was given a concession over Berlin the world would only gain a temporary respite and the Soviet Union would then come back again. The effect of concessions would be to cause a terrible loss of prestige for the West in the world and certainly for Germany. There were elections in Germany in 1961, and at that time if there was any doubt about the firmness of the Western position then the result might be to swing the balance in Germany in favour of the Social Democrats. If the Social Democrats came to power in Germany in 1961 then the balance of power in Europe would be shifted in favour of the Russians, who would then be up to the Rhine. Considering all these aspects of the question, the only solution was to stand on the Western position, and see if Mr. Khrushchev really wanted peace.

President Eisenhower said that he still could not get his question answered. Perhaps he had not expressed it clearly. Chancellor Adenauer said that if Mr. Khrushchev

succeeded in his aims then Berlin would not be prosperous. President Eisenhower said that the whole question was how to supply Berlin. Chancellor Adenauer said that the Western rights were well known and agreed by the Russians. The thing to do now was to wait and see what they did. President Eisenhower said that this was still not an answer to his point. President de Gaulle said that if Mr. Khrushchev wished to make Berlin Communist, he would go on wanting it, even with a change of status. As Mr. Khrushchev had raised the question of Berlin, he should be the one to make proposals. President Eisenhower said that he still wished to know what would happen if all the West could do was to stand on their position. Chancellor Adenauer said that he remembered the days when Russian tanks were expected on the Rhine at any moment. West Germany had stood firm during those days and would stand firm now. If some concessions were made, the Russians would continue to make demands on the West. But if they wanted peace, they would not move.

The Prime Minister said that the difficulty was that, as he understood the position, the West only had the legal rights to supply their troops in Berlin. This had been extended by a sort of tacit agreement to cover the civilian population, but the legal rights only covered the supply of troops. The extension was simply an acceptance of a de facto position. Thanks to the skilful way in which the Western hand had been played in Geneva, with the help of German representatives, the Conference had nearly come to a fair agreement about Berlin. The Prime Minister had always felt that agreement might have been reached on Berlin, but the Russians had not come up to the final decision. This had not

altogether surprised the Prime Minister, since he had always supposed that only Mr. Khrushchev himself would take such a decision.

Chancellor Adenauer said that he would like to remind the other Heads of Government of the Berlin airlift of 1953, during which not only the garrisons had been supplied. President Eisenhower said that he had been talking about the difficulties of the Western juridical position. What would be the position, for example, if Berlin was reduced to 1,000 calories a day? This was not a situation for which the West could go to war. Chancellor Adenauer said that Berlin was supplied for twelve months. President Eisenhower said that he quite realised this, but he was thinking of the longer term. Chancellor Adenauer said that much could happen in twelve months. President de Gaulle said that of course if Mr. Khrushchev wished to cause difficulties for Berlin, he would do so. President Eisenhower said that his difficulty was that the West had said that they were merely sticking by their juridical rights. But there was no treaty to say that all the roads and avenues of supply must be kept open. He wished to know what the situation was outside the juridical rights. President de Gaulle suggested that it would be for the West to consider any proposals put forward by Mr. Khrushchev about Berlin; after all, he had first raised the subject. It would not be for the West to raise the matter. President Eisenhower said that in his view Mr. Khrushchev wished to eliminate West Berlin, which was like a sore thumb. President de Gaulle said that of course Mr. Khrushchev could either accept the existence of West Berlin or torture it.

President Eisenhower said that, as he understood it, Mr. Khrushchev's argument was that as a result of the last war, West Berlin was a city inside a nation hostile to its form of government. Therefore he had proposed his plans for a free city with every sort of guarantee, the United Nations' presence and so forth, but no longer tied up with the Occupying Powers, nor having a Western garrison. The West had rejected this proposal, but as soon as this had happened, the President himself had begun to study what could be done for Berlin if international rights were obeyed. It was clear that the Russians could do a great deal against Berlin which would not give the West cause for war because it would not involve the Soviet Union breaking any treaty. President de Gaulle said this indeed was the whole question. Either Mr. Khrushchev wanted peace, or his main idea was to force concessions on Germany and Berlin.

Chancellor Adenauer enquired if the other Heads of Government had heard what Mr. Khrushchev had said to the Austrian President and Dr. Kreisky. He had said that he wished to make all Germany Communist. President Eisenhower observed that Mr. Khrushchev obviously wanted to do this. Chancellor Adenauer said that that was why he thought disarmament was important. President Eisenhower said that if he was in Chancellor Adenauer's place he would not be thinking about M.C.70 but would be trying to raise forty divisions. Chancellor Adenauer said that it was necessary to do one thing at a time. President Eisenhower said that the West must let Mr. Khrushchev make his proposals and not reject them in advance.

The Prime Minister said that the Geneva Conference had broken down on what was to be the position at the end of an interim period for Berlin. If the rights of both sides were to be preserved, then at the end of an interim period everyone must be where they were before. Geneva really broke down on this. It was possible that along these lines there might be a solution.

President Eisenhower said that one thing that the Russians would not accept, as they had explained to him, was a junction between West Berlin and West Germany. Chancellor Adenauer said that Mr. Khrushchev's view would change if all Germany became Communist. President de Gaulle said that everything depended on what Mr. Khrushchev wanted. If he wanted peace, then Berlin would not be all important. Perhaps what he wanted was some international understanding, real co-existence and a period of peace. Later, of course, after a detente, then perhaps the problem of Berlin would not seem so important. President Eisenhower said that he was afraid that, if we relaxed for five years, at the end of that time the Russians would not have changed. The Prime Minister said that this indicated the advantage of not pressing questions of principle. Perhaps the best hope was to urge a provisional arrangement which might perhaps last indefinitely. What would be important would be to find out whether the Russians would agree with this or not. Chancellor Adenauer said that he would like to ask why Mr. Khrushchev wanted Germany. Of course, he wanted it because of his idea of economic war against the United States. In 1955 Mr. Khrushchev had offered Chancellor Adenauer an alliance with the Russians against the United States. President de Gaulle said that if Mr. Khrushchev wanted war, then there would

be war. If he wanted peace then he would let the German question rest. The German question was the test.

The meeting ended at approximately 11.45 a.m.
